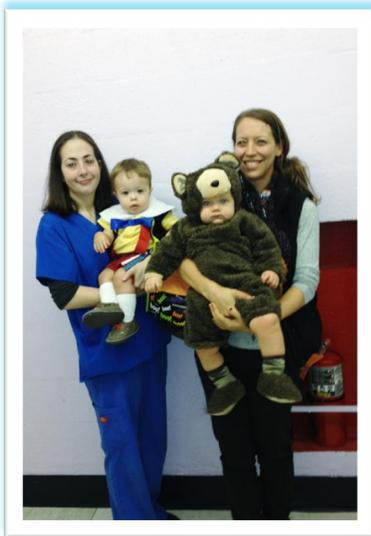


ACDS Touches Three Generations: Brings a Lifetime of Family and Friends Together



Plainview, NY – ACDS has been providing programs and services in and around Long Island for 45 years for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities. Members of their dedicated staff have been with them nearly as long. Their commitment to the organization has profoundly affected not just their lives, but also the lives of their families and friends across three generations.

Principal Cecilia Barry has been with ACDS for thirty years. In 1984, Barry along with 34-year veteran teacher Pamela Wise and a few other ACDS working moms, started what is now known as “Kids Connection,” a New York State Licensed, DSS approved daycare that provides an enriched Early Childhood Program for children ages six weeks to five years. This visionary daycare program first launched in Bellmore with the young mothers,

their six children and a handful of licensed professionals in a small room with toys and equipment brought from their homes.

What began as a way to bring their children to work quickly expanded. A larger space was acquired and staff members and siblings of students soon joined. It was then opened to the community in 1999 and now has a long waiting list. The curriculum currently includes enriched academics, mommy and me classes, music classes, movement classes, sensory activities, sign language, computer instruction, art education, socialization and attending skills.

As ACDS’s enrollment grew over the years, so did the spectrum of services and the number of lives touched by the organization. From the start, Cecilia Barry and Pamela Wise’s children were integrated with ACDS special needs children, which sparked lifelong friendships and connections. From years of hearing about the school’s services from Barry’s daughter, one of her daughter’s friends decided to become an occupational therapist.

Barry commented, “Pam’s daughter Meri and my daughter Emily have had a longtime friendship and each have a baby boy coming to Kid’s Connection. The hope is that this is the start for their children, too! The third generation continues the legacy.”

The network continues to branch out even further. Barry and Wise's children worked or interned at ACDS, which also influenced their career choices in the health care field. One of Barry's daughters is a speech and language pathologist working with a specialty in neonatology and feeding and another is studying to become a nurse. Wise's daughter is a licensed physical therapist.

With their continued commitment to ACDS, the intergenerational effect carries on as does their growth as educators. Now grandmothers, Barry and Wise's grandchildren are or have been enrolled in the daycare program. Wise has three grandchildren who attended ACDS' daycare program, one who was eligible for early intervention services when she was under three.

Wise commented, "Once my granddaughter was enrolled I saw things from the other end. I was able to experience both sides."

Even more ACDS grandmothers have their grandkids with them all day. They and their working daughters meet often with their immediate families and friends.

Barry continued, "ACDS is truly a lifelong agency. We were lucky to be able to have our children with us and see them grow. Now our grandchildren are here and our children continue to be involved. We've formed life-long friendships that remained long after our kids were grown. This organization has been very good to our families."

About ACDS

ACDS, located in Plainview, NY is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. ACDS has been providing programs and services in and around Long Island since 1966. ACDS currently serves more over 1000 children and adults, providing services that include Early Intervention and preschool special education programs, respite and recreation programs for children, teens and adults, adult Medicaid service coordination and eight supervised group homes in Nassau County. For more information, please visit acds.org or call 516-933-4700.

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